

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	SBR.48
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Cotton, John Thomas House
<b>Common Name:</b>	Whitney, Hannah S. P. - Burnett, Charles House
<b>Address:</b>	24 Main St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Southborough
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	Southborough
<b>Local No:</b>	54-89
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	
<b>Architect(s):</b>	
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Greek Revival
<b>Use(s):</b>	Cobbler; Single Family Dwelling House
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture; Engineering; Industry
<b>Area(s):</b>	SBR.AG: Southborough Town Center SBR.A: Main Street Area
<b>Designation(s):</b>	
<b>Building Materials(s):</b>	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Wood Clapboard; Wood Foundation: Granite; Stone, Cut



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

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## FORM B - BUILDING

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

Massachusetts Historical Commission

54-89

Marlborough

A

48

Massachusetts Archives Building

220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA 02125**RECEIVED**

JUL 03 2000

MASS. HIST. COMM

Town Southborough

Place (neighborhood or village) \_\_\_\_\_

Southborough centerAddress 24 Main StreetHistoric Name John T. Cotton HouseUses: Present dwellingOriginal dwellingDate of Construction part: 1802;most: mid-19th C.Source date on house timber; visual assessmentStyle/Form Greek RevivalArchitect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation graniteWall/Trim wood clapboardRoof asphalt

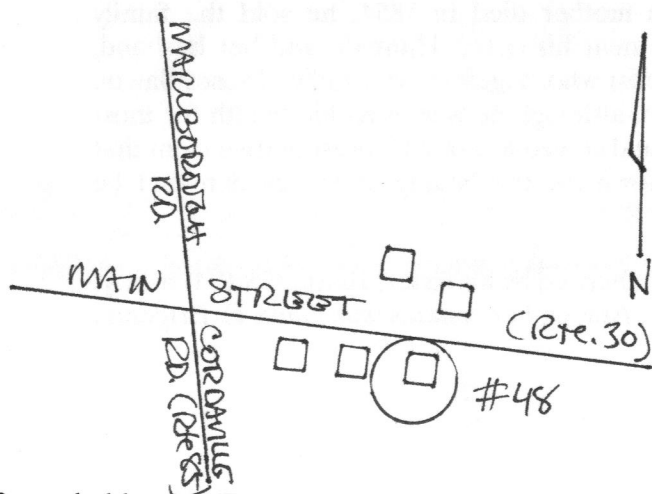
Outbuildings/Secondary Structures \_\_\_\_\_

none

Major Alterations (with dates) \_\_\_\_\_

raised and enlarged--ca. 1840s (see text)Condition excellentMoved [x]no [ ] yes Date N/AAcreage less than one acreSetting Faces N. on narrow lot in line of 19th-C.houses. Mature evergreens at front; stone retainingwall along W. side of house, extending to rear.

it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets, including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.

Recorded by Forbes/Schuler, consultantsOrganization Southborough Historical CommissionDate February/June, 2000

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [ ] *see continuation sheet*

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

This well-preserved house is a fine example of a simple, vernacular Greek Revival sidehall-entry, gable-front, two-story house with a hip-roofed facade-width front porch on three fluted Doric columns. A one-story side-gabled ell abuts the rear southeast corner of the house. The porch has a square-dowel balustrade. On the west side of the building is one-story polygonal bay window with 4-over-4-sash.

Viewed from the northeast, the main house is a three- by three-bay building, with the main entry in the easternmost facade bay. The door is a four-panel type, flanked by four-pane sidelights over narrow paneled aprons, with a surround of recessed-paneled pilasters, and surmounted by a frieze. The ell has a twentieth-century multi-light- and panel door, with a multi-pane window beside it. Most of the rest of the windows in the house are 6-over-6-sash, in flat surrounds, with louvered wooden shutters. Other architectural trim consists of a molded, boxed cornice with slight returns, narrow cornerboards with molded tops, and a water table at the base of the walls.

According to owners' records, a kitchen with a beehive oven was formerly located in the cellar. Some old woodwork in the house includes hand-planed and pegged doors on the first floor.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [x] *see continuation sheet*

*Explain history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Further research will be necessary to explain the very early date of 1802 that has been found on one of the structural timbers of this house. According to tradition, in the 1840s the building was enlarged and raised to two stories, and possibly converted from a former shoe shop. No building appears at this location on the map of 1831, but in 1856 and 1857 a building is shown in this position. The name of "C. Newton" (possibly Curtis Newton) is shown nearby, but not immediately next to the building.

Sometime after 1854, this became the home of **John Thomas Cotton**, one of Southborough's most vocal abolitionists of the 1850s and early '60s. It is not known exactly when he bought the house (he is not listed as owning any real estate in 1860), but after his mother died in 1854, he sold the family homestead in Boylston and came to Southborough to be near his sister, Hannah, and her husband, Daniel S. Whitney. Mr. Whitney was an ordained evangelist who, together with miller Moses Sawin, was leading the local abolitionist movement. Mr. Cotton, although he was in feeble health for most of his life, had been the longtime Town Clerk of Boylston, and served as State Representative from that town for many years. In Southborough he was well-known for the beauty of the garden that he cultivated here at his home on Main Street. He died in 1884.

Mr. Cotton had never been married, and the property was inherited by his sister, **Hannah S.P. Whitney**, who owned it through 1897, renting it out for many years. Among her tenants was Dana E. Brigham, longtime custodian of the Town Hall.

[x] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, a completed National Register Criteria Statement form is attached.*

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Southborough

24 Main Street

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area(s)  
A

Form No.  
48

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

Although the map of 1898 shows that this was one of three houses at the center owned by Mrs. **Abigail Wilson** in that year, according to owners' records the property was also owned by **Charles Burnett**, son of Joseph Burnett, sometime before his death in 1900. A cistern under the back yard was linked to pipes bringing water to the house. It is believed that the water came all the way from Crystal Spring on Deerfoot Farm property south of Turnpike Road, a source which supplied water to several Burnett family properties.

In the 1910s or 1920s the property was acquired by **J. Carbierre**, who was on the staff of the Fay School. He subsequently took up residence on the Fay campus.

**Frederick C. Staples** and his wife, **Elizabeth**, (see 9 Cordaville Road) owned the house by 1936. In 1928 Mr. Staples retired from his position as Assistant Headmaster at the Fay School, where he had joined the faculty in 1899. The Staples owned the house until 1959.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [ ] *see continuation sheet*

Maps and Atlases: 1856; 1857 (possibly "C. Newton"); 1870 (JT Cotton); 1898 (Mrs. WP Wilson).

Noble, Richard. Fences of Stone: a History of Southborough, MA. Portsmouth, NH: Peter Randall, 1990.

Old Southborough, a Photographic Essay. Southborough Historical Society, 1981.

Simpson, Louise. Old Houses in Southborough. Unpublished manuscript, 1904.

Southborough Historical Society files.

Town of Southborough: Vital Records; Annual Reports and Tax Valuations, various dates.

Notes provided by owners, 6/2000.

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community  
Southborough

Property Address  
24 Main Street

Area(s)  
A

Form No(s).  
48

## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

☒ Individually eligible    ☐ Eligible only in a historic district  
☒ Contributing to a potential historic district    ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A    ☐ B    ☒ C    ☐ D

Criteria Considerations:    ☐ A    ☐ B    ☐ C    ☐ D    ☐ E    ☐ F    ☐ G

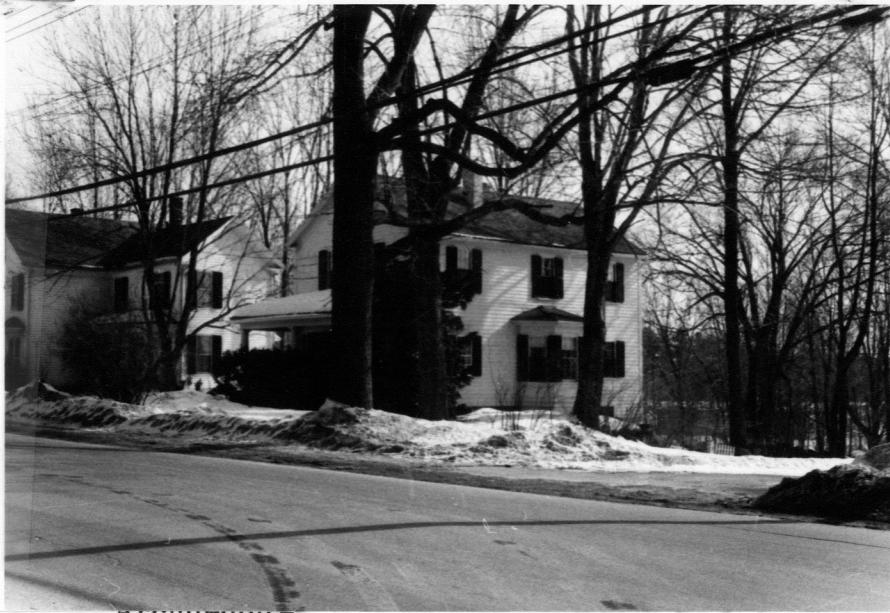
Statement of Significance by Forbes/Schuler, Consultants

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The John Cotton House meets Criterion C of the National Register individually at the local level as a well-preserved example of a small gable-front Greek Revival House that includes portions of one of the earlier buildings on the lower section of Main Street. It also fulfills Criterion A for its connection with the Cotton and Whitney families, prominent local abolitionists in the years prior to the Civil War. For these reasons it is also eligible as a contributing property in a district encompassing the historic residential and institutional meetinghouse center of the town.

The property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.





PHD 48

(A)

P1- SOUTH  
US-100-1000

Southborough

Set address 24 Main St

Final use dwelling

Present use

Present owner Donald Leavett

Open to public

Architecture  
Art/sculpture  
Education  
Government  
Literature  
MusicTravel/communication  
Military affairs  
Religion/philosophy  
Indians  
Development of town/city

Date 1802 Style Colonial

Source of date marked in house

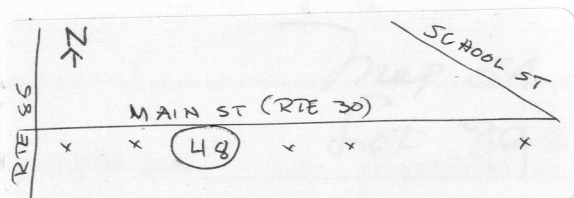
Architect

3. CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Moved Altered Added 2nd Story

## 4. DESCRIPTION

FOUNDATION/BASEMENT: High Regular Low Material: Quincy GraniteWALL COVER: Wood Clapboard Brick Stone OtherROOF: Ridge Gambrel Flat Hip Mansard  
Tower Cupola Dormer windows Balustrade GrillworkCHIMNEYS: 1 2 3 4 Center End Interior Irregular Cluster ElaborateSTORIES: 1 2 3 4 ATTACHMENTS: Wings Ell ShedPORCHES: 1 2 3 4 PORTICO BalconyFACADE: Gable end: Front/Side Ornament:Entrance: Side Front: Center Side Details:Windows: Spacing: Regular/Irregular Identical/VariedCorners: Plain Pilasters Quoins Cornerboards

5. Indicate location of structure in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings

6. Footage of structure from street 15  
Property has 50 feet frontage on street

Recorder

For

Photo 2-6 Date 1971

SEE REVERSE SIDE

# RELATION OF SURROUNDING TO STRUCTURE

SBR.48

## 1. Outbuildings

## 2. Landscape Features: Agriculture Open Wooded Garden: Formal/Informal

Predominant features

Landscape architect

## 3. Neighboring Structures

Style: Colonial Federal Greek Revival Gothic Revival Italian Villa Lombard Rom.  
Venetian Gothic Mansard Richardsonian Modern

Use: Residential Commercial Religious

Conditions: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF SITE (Refer and elaborate on theme circled on front of form)

Built in 1802, according to a date found during restoration ①

Once a shoe shop

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND/OR REFERENCE

① HDSC Report 1972

1870 ?

1898 Mrs. W.P. Wilson

also

Charles Burnett

John Cotton

D.S. Whitney

Susie Brewer

J. Carrière

## RESTRICTIONS

Fred Staples

Original Owner:

Deed Information: Book Number 4054 Page 260, Worcester Co. Registry of Deeds

2488 - 190